

THE BLOOMFIELD CITIZEN

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PRESBYTERIANS AND PROHIBITION.

The *Montclair Times* presents us with an editorial which evidently speaks "by authority" of the recent action of the Synod of New Jersey upon the temperance question. And now, lest our M. T. friend should suspect us of a design to satirise it and make its life miserable, we wish humbly to remark that we intend, in this article, to overlook minor matters altogether. We are quite willing to admit the originality of the document, and hence we reply to it in all seriousness and without any badinage whatever.

The *Montclair Times* claims, in this editorial, that the Synod of New Jersey has sustained the Prohibition issue. But when it is said that the opponents of the measure "resorted to roll calls, substitutions, postponements, and all the tactics resorted to by legal filibusters," we prefer to dispense with any criticism of literary style, and meet the statement by a fair exposition of the case.

A "standing committee" on the subject of Temperance had appended some careful resolutions to their report. These were both strong and judicious, and recognized a divergence of sentiment as to the proper method of effecting the one great purpose. In copying these resolutions, the *Montclair Times* has erred in placing the amendment after the second—for it really came after the first. The first resolution is as follows:

"That this Synod expresses its profound sense of the importance of this subject, and urges the ministers and people to more preaching and praying in prohibition of the cause of temperance, and that then all shall work and act as they pray."

No sooner was this resolution before the house than an amendment was offered which was unmistakably an endorsement, not simply of prohibition in itself, but of the Rev. Solomon Parsons' Prohibition Party. Attention was instantly called to the fact; the suggestion was made, and accepted, that a clause be inserted, denying that the Synod committed itself to such a political action; and the debate proceeded. The real difficulty was not removed by the amendment to the amendment. It left the strong original resolution to be interpreted just as if no disclaimer had been introduced. Either the amendment was worthless and useless, or else it meant something. If it meant something, it could only mean that the Synod—embracing six hundred Presbyterian ministers and elders, and covering the entire State—endorsed and supported whatever agency was trying to secure direct legal prohibition. No other such agency is known to exist except this Prohibition Party. It therefore came around to precisely the same result as before. The amendment in every form was, in short, a trap, a snare, and a delusion.

At the afternoon session it was clearly understood that a majority of the house favored the amendment, since it had already refused to table it by a standing vote, which included two-thirds of those present. It was then stated that the majority had determined to press their rights and to pass the amendment, and a "substitute" was offered—not by the minority, but by the majority—which reads as follows, and should be taken in connection with the resolution quoted above:

"And that without pledging ourselves to any political party, we declare ourselves in favor of the legal prohibition of the liquor traffic."

There was no variation in this "substitute" from the language and ideas of the previous amendment and of its "accepted" clause, disclaiming the political import of the action. It was nothing but a cunning evasion of the apparent difficulty and it was intended to commit (and the *Montclair Times* is right in saying that it did commit) the Synod to prohibition, "regardless of party affiliations." Every man who did not go upon the record, by name, in the negative, is held, by that vote, to disregard his Re-

publican or Democratic "affiliations," or to be disloyal to his religious denomination.

This was the point, then, upon which the debate centered. Some of the minority for one reason and some for another—but all of them as good temperance men—felt it to be unwise, unsafe, and wrong to bind the Synod in such a manner. It was then that a vote was called for by *aye* and *no*. And it was distinctly the fault of the clerk, in failing to take down the actual names of voters, which caused a second roll call. On this second call the original numbers of 178 to 91 had fallen to 174 and 97, owing to the absence of some who had already left the Synod for their homes. The proportion however is the same, and it may be said that fully one-third of that body—mostly to be found east of Morristown—are opposed to the action which was taken. Being fairly registered in the negative, they are consequently to be set free from whatever blame or complication may hereafter result.

It must not be forgotten that, upon the call of Dr. E. R. Craven, of Newark, the question was divided, and the original resolution was voted upon by itself. It was passed unanimously, and the vote was so entered upon the minutes.

The second resolution was also passed, and is as follows:

"That this Synod cordially approves and commends the work of the Assembly's committee on temperance, and that all our churches are urged to take an annual collection for this cause, the total thereof to be sent to the committee."

From first to last the minority had but one purpose—to prevent the Synod becoming committed to a political deliverance which would involve serious consequences, and be misunderstood, and misused. Many who voted in the minority favor any form of legal restriction which can be enforced, even to the most stringent prohibition. But they declined to bind other men's consciences; and they are convinced that a third party in politics this Fall simply means victory for the Democratic side. They are not enthusiastic over the loss of any votes to Leon Abbott by such a course. Prohibition votes are quite sure to come mainly from the Republican ranks.

Moreover they see no prospect that, while existing laws are not enforced, a prohibition statute would do any more good than a bridle and saddle to a man who had no horse.

We take it, however, that there are people who will saddle and bridle a hobby-horse, sooner than have nothing to ride. This statement may also be regarded as a sufficient answer to the communication of our friend, J. G. B., in the present number of THE CITIZEN. The writer of the present editorial is personally favorable to as strong a law as can be made effective; and he feels confident that Bloomfield, at least, would not suffer if prohibition were rigidly enforced.

S. W. D.

OUR YOUNG MEN.

It seems to us that there is an irreconcilable element in our population. It does not do what any other element does—namely, melt and mix in with the great mass of our people. This element is our Young Men.

Nor is this because no interest is taken in their welfare. Protestants and Catholics alike are caring for them in their churches. The Fire Association furnishes a convenient outlet for some of the energy that is in them—and we are glad to see a clubhouse of this character, where liquor and games of chance are rigidly denied an entrance. But after all, there remains a section, a corner, of this body of young men which is not yet reached—and which churches and other agencies do not touch.

These Young Men go and come from the city on the earlier and later trains. Sometimes the experience of their fellow passengers is not altogether pleasant, because of the exuberance of their animal spirits. Sometimes it is rather too plain that there has been a kind of spirits which cannot be classed as altogether natural to them. Sour-faced people, who have forgotten their own youth, and who have reacted into the extreme of harshness, are inclined to be very severe with these young fellows. But the large majority of our citizens treat them kindly, warn them quietly, and do all they can to make men out of them.

It is a good thing that our people have taken one side of this matter in hand, and that every religious organization among us has been, and is, doing its share to increase the healthy and rational amusements and pleasures of this class in the community, and so to keep them at home and to give them a sort of occupation. Music, harmless mirth, and entertaining lectures or readings, are surely among the best auxiliaries we can employ.

If we had a Public Reading Room, it would not be a bad idea. It was once designed that there should be a Library in Bloomfield, but that day appears to be distant still. But there is no kind of doubt that if the room of the Trunk Company were supplied with papers and periodicals, it would be an advantage. Any of our citizens could do a real act of kindness by giving to "the fire ladders" the subscription price of some journal or magazine.

These are negative measures. The measures which are positive consist in our remembering that such young men are among us; that they have in them the making of successful and happy citizens, or of villains and scoundrels of society; and that in proportion as we take

this matter in time, we shall benefit our entire town and neighborhood. In the name of these Young Men, we therefore call for such measures as will enforce the Laws of the State in our midst. We call for the suppression of Unlicensed Saloons; for the prevention of Gambling in every form and for the prompt ejection of persons of known bad character. It is not the province of this journal to do any preaching, or to advocate the purely religious side of such a reform. But we have the right, and we venture to employ it, to say that no man or woman among us should be allowed to wantonly violate the law. Whatever that law permits, we have no right to withhold. Whatever that law forbids, we are bound to prevent.

"If I save the land, to hastening till a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

The greatest agency after all is the power of our Young Ladies. If they will set a high moral standard, the young men will not do as his "best girl" wants him to do, before he is married to her, it is a dead certainty that he will make her life sorrowful afterwards.

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